Piling of Tobacco Stock

2483. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether several million kilograms of tobacco stocks are piling up in the State Trading Corporation godowns and in the godowns of the Growers' Co-operative Union; and

(b) if so, the measures taken to rescue the tobacco growers in distress ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Various measures taken to rescue the tobacco growers in distress include, *inter-alia* :

(i) Meeting with representatives of the Reserve Bank of India and in the leading bankers in order to ensure credit flows to the tobacco traders so as to keep the tobacco purchase system flowing;

(ii) Visit of a tobacco trade delegation of 6 members to Libya, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria in February, 2000 to promote Indian exports of tobacco in these countries;

(iii) Visit to another Indian tobacco trade delegation recently to Russia to explore opportunities for greater cooperation between the tobacco industries of the two countries;

(iv) Meeting held with manufacturers, exporters and trades to purchase tobacco at platforms as per requirements indicated while fixing crop size;

(v) Meetings held farmers to solve the situation of over supply;

(vi) Inducting Government agency to enter the market;

(vii) Fresh registration of growers not to be undertaken for the time being.

Trade Deficit

2484. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is fact that India's trade deficit for April-December 1999 as 7 billion is marginally lower than that for the previous corresponding period;

(b) what was the anticipated for this period and how this deficit of $7 billion compares with that; and